

## The New York Times

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# *John Culver, Liberal Congressman From Iowa, Is Dead at 86*

**By The Associated Press**

Dec. 28, 2018

John C. Culver, an influential liberal who represented Iowa in Congress during the Vietnam War era, died on Wednesday at his home near Washington. He was 86.

His death was confirmed by Jim Larew, a longtime friend who was a top aide to Mr. Culver's son, Chet, when he was governor of Iowa from 2007 to 2011.

John Culver, a Democrat, won praise across the political spectrum for his independence. When he lost his bid for re-election to the Senate after one term in 1980, Senator Barry Goldwater, the conservative Arizona Republican, wrote to him, "While you and I disagree rather violently on a number of subjects, I have always respected you for your honesty and your willingness to work your heart out."

Mr. Culver was first elected to the House of Representatives in 1964. He served five terms before moving to the Senate in 1974 after winning a race for a seat that became open when Senator Harold Hughes, a fellow Democrat, retired.

During his decade in the House, he served on a number of committees, including the House Un-American Activities Committee, which investigated allegations of Communist ties against United States citizens. He was critical of the committee's methods and wrote dissenting opinions for every one of its reports.

Mr. Culver was also among the few members of the House who voted against a 1967 bill to make flag burning a federal crime with stiff penalties. He later said in a speech that this was among the most important votes he ever cast.

"After studying the legislation, I realized I had to choose which fork in the road I would travel, because my conscience and my constituency were clearly in conflict," he said. "I was convinced that, although most distasteful to me, the burning of the American flag was protected speech under the U.S. Constitution."

John Chester Culver was born on Aug. 8, 1932, in Rochester, Minn., and grew up in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. He attended Harvard, where he played fullback on the football team. After graduating, he served three years in the Marine Corps before returning to Harvard to earn a law degree.

Edward M. Kennedy, who had been a teammate of Mr. Culver's on the Harvard team, hired him as a legislative assistant in 1962 after being elected to the Senate.

The next year Mr. Culver returned to Cedar Rapids, where he was elected to represent Iowa's Second Congressional District in 1964, defeating the Republican incumbent, James Bromwell.

During his one term in the Senate, Mr. Culver established the so-called Culver Commission, which helped modernize the Senate's procedures.

The Republican Chuck Grassley, then a congressman, handily defeated Mr. Culver in 1980 and has served in the Senate ever since. Aides said Mr. Culver was proud to have defended his liberal voting record amid that year's conservative movement, which put Ronald Reagan and other Republicans in power.

"John Culver," the commentator Jack Newfield wrote during that campaign, "understands that losing a Senate seat is less important than losing his self-respect."

After leaving office, Mr. Culver practiced law in Washington. He maintained ties to Harvard as a member of an advisory committee for its Institute of Politics, where he served as interim director in 2010.

He is survived by his wife of 34 years, Mary Jane Cheechi; three daughters, Catherine Jungmann, Rebecca Scoggin and Christina Culver; two sons, John and Chet; his sister, Katherine Baty; and eight grandchildren.

The New York Times contributed reporting.